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ABSTRACT

Alaska Native educators have developed standards that schools and communities can use to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural well-being of their students. These "cultural standards" are intended to complement Alaska state content and performance standards. Standards have been developed for five areas: students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. Culturally knowledgeable students are well grounded in community heritage and traditions and are able to build on their local cultural knowledge and skills to achieve personal success and an awareness of their place in the world. Culturally responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work, participate in community activities, foster complementary educational expectations between home and school, and recognize individual student potential. Cultural standards for curriculum address reinforcement of students' cultural integrity, recognition of cultural knowledge, use of the local language and cultural knowledge as a curriculum foundation, fostering diverse knowledge systems, and situating local knowledge and actions in a global context. Cultural standards for schools promote participation of Elders in schooling, multiple forms of access to learning and assessment, opportunities to learn in or about heritage languages, indigenous professional staff, inviting and accessible facilities, and school-community interaction. Cultural standards for communities outline forms of community support for local cultural traditions, the heritage language, cultural education, families, teachers, and the school. Performance indicators are given for each standard. Uses of the cultural standards are suggested in the preface. (SAS)

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Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools

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Cultural Standards for:

Students
Educators
Schools
Curriculum
Communities

RC 021692

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Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools

adopted by the

Assembly of Alaska Native Educators
Anchorage, Alaska
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Alaska Native Education Council
Alaska Native Teachers for Excellence/Anchorage
Consortium for Alaska Native Higher Education
Alaska First Nations Research Network
Center For Cross-Cultural Studies
Alaska State Board of Education

Preface

The following standards have been developed by Alaska Native educators to provide a way for schools and communities to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural well being of the students in their care. These "cultural standards" are predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally-responsive educators, curriculum and schools.

For several years, Alaska has been developing "content standards" to define what students should know and be able to do as they go through school. In addition, "performance standards" are being developed for teachers and administrators, and a set of "quality school standards" have been put forward by the Alaska Department of Education to serve as a basis for accrediting schools in Alaska. To the extent that these state standards are written for general use throughout Alaska, they don't always address some of the special issues that are of critical importance to schools in rural Alaska, particularly those serving Alaska Native communities and students.

Through a series of regional and statewide meetings associated with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (with funding provided by the National Science Foundation and the Annenberg Rural Challenge, and administrative support from the Alaska Federation of Natives in collaboration with the University of Alaska), Alaska Native educators have developed the following "Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools" for consideration by educators serving Native students around the state. Though the emphasis is on rural schools serving Native communities, many of the standards are applicable to all students and

communities because they focus curricular attention on in-depth study of the surrounding physical and cultural environment in which the school is situated, while recognizing the unique contribution that indigenous people can make to such study as long-term inhabitants who have accumulated extensive specialized knowledge related to that environment.

Standards have been drawn up in five areas, including those for students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. These "cultural standards" provide guidelines or touchstones against which schools and communities can examine what they are doing to attend to the cultural well-being of the young people they are responsible for nurturing to adulthood. The standards included here serve as a complement to, not as a replacement for, those adopted by the State of Alaska. While the state standards stipulate what students should know and be able to do, the cultural standards are oriented more toward providing guidance on how to get them there in such a way that they become responsible, capable and whole human beings in the process. The emphasis is on fostering a strong connection between what students experience in school and their lives out of school by providing opportunities for students to engage in in-depth experiential learning in real-world contexts. By shifting the focus in the curriculum from teaching/learning *about* cultural heritage as another subject to teaching/learning *through* the local culture as a foundation for all education, it is intended that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and world views be recognized as equally valid, adaptable and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways.

The cultural standards outlined in this document are not intended to be inclusive, exclusive or conclusive, and thus should be reviewed and adapted to fit local needs. Each school, community and related organization should consider which of these standards are appropriate and which are not, and when necessary, develop additional cultural standards to accommodate local circumstances. Terms should be interpreted to fit local conventions, especially with reference to meanings associated with the definition of Elder, tradition, spirituality, or anything relating to the use of the local language. Where differences of interpretation exist, they should be respected and accommodated to the maximum extent possible. The cultural standards are not intended to produce standardization, but rather to encourage schools to nurture and build upon the

rich and varied cultural traditions that continue to be practiced in communities throughout Alaska.

Some of the multiple uses to which these cultural standards may be put are as follows:

1. They may be used as a basis for reviewing school or district-level goals, policies and practices with regard to the curriculum and pedagogy being implemented in each community or cultural area.
2. They may be used by a local community to examine the kind of home/family environment and parenting support systems that are provided for the upbringing of its children.
3. They may be used to devise locally appropriate ways to review student and teacher performance as it relates to nurturing and practicing culturally-healthy behavior, including serving as potential graduation requirements for students.
4. They may be used to strengthen the commitment to revitalizing the local language and culture and fostering the involvement of Elders as an educational resource.
5. They may be used to help teachers identify teaching practices that are adaptable to the cultural context in which they are teaching.
6. They may be used to guide the preparation and orientation of teachers in ways that help them attend to the cultural well-being of their students.
7. They may serve as criteria against which to evaluate educational programs intended to address the cultural needs of students.
8. They may be used to guide the formation of state-level policies and regulations and the allocation of resources in support of equal educational opportunities for all children in Alaska.

Curriculum resources and technical support to implement the kind of learning experiences encouraged by the enclosed cultural standards may be found through the Alaska Native Knowledge Network web site located at http://www.ankn.uaf.edu, or call (907) 474-5897.

Cultural Standards for Students

A.

Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. assume responsibility for their role in relation to the well-being of the cultural community and their life-long obligations as a community member;
2. recount their own genealogy and family history;
3. acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history;
4. practice their traditional responsibilities to the surrounding environment;
5. reflect through their own actions the critical role that the local heritage language plays in fostering a sense of who they are and how they understand the world around them;
6. live a life in accordance with the cultural values and traditions of the local community and integrate them into their everyday behavior.
7. determine the place of their cultural community in the regional, state, national and international political and economic systems;

B.

Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own;
2. make effective use of the knowledge, skills and ways of knowing from their own cultural traditions to learn about the larger world in which they live;
3. make appropriate choices regarding the long-term consequences of their actions;
4. identify appropriate forms of technology and anticipate the consequences of their use for improving the quality of life

C.

Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to actively participate in various cultural environments.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. perform subsistence activities in ways that are appropriate to local cultural traditions;
2. make constructive contributions to the governance of their community and the well-being of their family;
3. attain a healthy lifestyle through which they are able to maintain their own social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being;
4. enter into and function effectively in a variety of cultural settings.

D.

Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

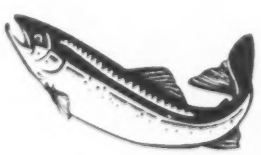
1. acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with Elders;
2. participate in and make constructive contributions to the learning activities associated with a traditional camp environment;
3. interact with Elders in a loving and respectful way that demonstrates an appreciation of their role as culture-bearers and educators in the community;
4. gather oral and written history information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance;
5. identify and utilize appropriate sources of cultural knowledge to find solutions to everyday problems;
6. engage in a realistic self-assessment to identify strengths and needs and make appropriate decisions to enhance life skills.

E.

Culturally-knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. recognize and build upon the inter-relationships that exist among the spiritual, natural and human realms in the world around them, as reflected in their own cultural traditions and beliefs as well as those of others;
2. understand the ecology and geography of the bioregion they inhabit;
3. demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between world view and the way knowledge is formed and used;
4. determine how ideas and concepts from one knowledge system relate to those derived from other knowledge systems;
5. recognize how and why cultures change over time;
6. anticipate the changes that occur when different cultural systems come in contact with one another;
7. determine how cultural values and beliefs influence the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds;
8. identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world.



Cultural Standards for Educators

A.

Culturally-responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. recognize the validity and integrity of the traditional knowledge system;
2. utilize Elders' expertise in multiple ways in their teaching;
3. provide opportunities and time for students to learn in settings where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant;
4. provide opportunities for students to learn through observation and hands-on demonstration of cultural knowledge and skills;
5. adhere to the cultural and intellectual property rights that pertain to all aspects of the local knowledge they are addressing;
6. continually involve themselves in learning about the local culture.

B.

Culturally-responsive educators use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the students.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment;
2. utilize traditional settings such as camps as learning environments for transmitting both cultural and academic knowledge and skills;
3. provide integrated learning activities organized around themes of local significance and across subject areas;
4. are knowledgeable in all the areas of local history and cultural tradition that may have bearing on their work as a teacher, including the appropriate times for certain knowledge to be taught;
5. seek to ground all teaching in a constructive process built on a local cultural foundation.

C.

Culturally-responsive educators participate in community events and activities in an appropriate and supportive way.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. become active members of the community in which they teach and make positive and culturally-appropriate contributions to the well being of that community;

2. exercise professional responsibilities in the context of local cultural traditions and expectations;

3. maintain a close working relationship with and make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of their co-workers from the local community.

D. Culturally-responsive educators work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. promote extensive community and parental interaction and involvement in their children's education;

2. involve Elders, parents and local leaders in all aspects of instructional planning and implementation;

3. seek to continually learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and community;

4. seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching.

E.

Culturally-responsive educators recognize the full educational potential of each student and provide the challenges necessary for them to achieve that potential.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. recognize cultural differences as positive attributes around which to build appropriate educational experiences;
2. provide learning opportunities that help students recognize the integrity of the knowledge they bring with them and use that knowledge as a springboard to new understandings;
3. reinforce the student's sense of cultural identity and place in the world;
4. acquaint students with the world beyond their home community in ways that expand their horizons while strengthening their own identities;
5. recognize the need for all people to understand the importance of learning about other cultures and appreciating what each has to offer.

Cultural Standards for Curriculum

A.

A culturally-responsive curriculum reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes that all knowledge is imbedded in a larger system of cultural beliefs, values and practices, each with its own integrity and interconnectedness;
2. insures that students acquire not only the surface knowledge of their culture, but are also well grounded in the deeper aspects of the associated beliefs and practices;
3. incorporates contemporary adaptations along with the historical and traditional aspects of the local culture;
4. respects and validates knowledge that has been derived from a variety of cultural traditions;
5. provides opportunities for students to study all subjects starting from a base in the local knowledge system.

B.

A culturally-responsive curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes the contemporary validity of much of the traditional cultural knowledge, values and beliefs, and grounds students learning in the principles and practices associated with that knowledge;
2. provides students with an understanding of the dynamics of cultural systems as they change over time, and as they are impacted by external forces;
3. incorporates the in-depth study of unique elements of contemporary life in Native communities in Alaska, such as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, subsistence, sovereignty and self-determination.

C.

A culturally-responsive curriculum uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. utilizes the local language as a base from which to learn the deeper meanings of the local cultural knowledge, values, beliefs and practices;
2. recognizes the depth of knowledge that is associated with the long inhabitation of a particular place and utilizes the study of "place" as a basis for the comparative analysis of contemporary social, political and economic systems;

3. incorporates language and cultural immersion experiences wherever in-depth cultural understanding is necessary;
4. views all community members as potential teachers and all events in the community as potential learning opportunities;
5. treats local cultural knowledge as a means to acquire the conventional curriculum content as outlined in state standards, as well as an end in itself;
6. makes appropriate use of modern tools and technology to help document and transmit traditional cultural knowledge;
7. is sensitive to traditional cultural protocol, including role of spirituality, as it relates to appropriate uses of local knowledge.

D. A culturally-responsive curriculum fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. draws parallels between knowledge derived from oral tradition and that derived from books;
2. engages students in the construction of new knowledge and understandings that contribute to an ever-expanding view of the world.

E.

A culturally-responsive curriculum situates local knowledge and actions in a global context.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages students to consider the inter-relationship between their local circumstances and the global community;
2. conveys to students that every culture and community contributes to, at the same time that it receives from the global knowledge base;
3. prepares students to "think globally, act locally."

Cultural Standards for Schools

A.

A culturally-responsive school fosters the on-going participation of Elders in all aspects of the schooling process.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. maintains multiple avenues for Elders to interact formally and informally with students at all times;
2. provides opportunities for students to regularly engage in the documenting of Elders' cultural knowledge and produce appropriate print and multimedia materials that share this knowledge with others;
3. includes explicit statements regarding the cultural values that are fostered in the community and integrates those values in all aspects of the school program and operation;
4. utilizes educational models that are grounded in the traditional world view and ways of knowing associated with the cultural knowledge system reflected in the community.

B.

A culturally-responsive school provides multiple avenues for students to access the learning that is offered, as well as multiple forms of assessment for students to demonstrate what they have learned.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. utilizes a broad range of culturally-appropriate performance standards to assess student knowledge and skills;
2. encourages and supports experientially oriented approaches to education that makes extensive use of community-based resources and expertise;
3. provides cultural and language immersion programs in which student acquire in-depth understanding of the culture of which they are members;
4. helps students develop the capacity to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate decisions based on such a self-assessment.

C.

A culturally-responsive school provides opportunities for students to learn in and/or about their heritage language.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides language immersion opportunities for students who wish to learn in their heritage language;
2. offers courses that acquaint all students with the heritage language of the local community;
3. makes available reading materials and courses through which students can acquire literacy in the heritage language;

4. provides opportunities for teachers to gain familiarity with the heritage language of the students they teach through summer immersion experiences.

D.

A culturally-responsive school has a high level of involvement of professional staff who are of the same cultural background as the students with whom they are working.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages and supports the professional development of local personnel to assume teaching and administrative roles in the school;
2. recruits and hires teachers whose background is similar to that of the students they will be teaching;
3. provides a cultural orientation camp and mentoring program for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community and school;
4. fosters and supports opportunities for teachers to participate in professional activities and associations that help them expand their repertoire of cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills.

E.

A culturally-responsive school consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides a physical environment that is inviting and readily accessible for local people to enter and utilize;

2. makes use of facilities throughout the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers;

3. utilizes local expertise, including students, to provide culturally-appropriate displays of arts, crafts and other forms of decoration and space design.

F.

A culturally-responsive school fosters extensive on-going participation, communication and interaction between school and community personnel.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. holds regular formal and informal events bringing together students, parents, teachers and other school and community personnel to review, evaluate and plan the educational program that is being offered;

2. provides regular opportunities for local and regional board deliberations and decision-making on policy, program and personnel issues related to the school;

3. sponsors on-going activities and events in the school and community that celebrate and provide opportunities for students to put into practice and display their knowledge of local cultural traditions.

Cultural Standards for Communities

A.

A culturally-supportive community incorporates the practice of local cultural traditions in its everyday affairs.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides respected Elders with a place of honor in community functions;
2. models culturally-appropriate behavior in the day-to-day life of the community;
3. utilizes traditional child-rearing and parenting practices that reinforce a sense of identity and belonging;
4. organizes and encourages participation of members from all ages in regular community-wide, family-oriented events;
5. incorporates and reinforces traditional cultural values and beliefs in all formal and informal community functions.

B.

A culturally-supportive community nurtures the use of the local heritage language.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes the role that language plays in conveying the deeper aspects of cultural knowledge and traditions;

2. sponsors local heritage language immersion opportunities for young children when they are at the critical age for language learning;

3. encourages the use of the local heritage language whenever possible in the everyday affairs of the community, including meetings, cultural events, print materials and broadcast media;

4. assists in the preparation of curriculum resource material in the local heritage language for use in the school;

5. provides simultaneous translation services for public meetings where persons unfamiliar with the local heritage language are participants.

C. A culturally-supportive community takes an active role in the education of all its members.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages broad-based participation of parents in all aspects of their children's education, both in and out of school;

2. insures active participation by community members in reviewing all local, regional and state initiatives that have bearing on the education of their children;

3. encourages and supports members of the local community who wish to pursue further education to assume teaching and administrative roles in the school;

4. engages in subsistence activities, sponsors cultural camps and hosts community events that provide an opportunity for children to actively participate in and learn appropriate cultural values and behavior;

5. provides opportunities for all community members to acquire and practice the appropriate knowledge and skills associated with local cultural traditions.

D.

A culturally-supportive community nurtures family responsibility, sense of belonging and cultural identity.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. fosters cross-generational sharing of parenting and child-rearing practices;
2. creates a supportive environment for youth to participate in local affairs and acquire the skills to be contributing members of the community;
3. adopts the adage, "It takes the whole village to raise a child."

E.

A culturally-supportive community assists teachers in learning and utilizing local cultural traditions and practices.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. sponsors a cultural orientation camp and community mentoring program for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community;
2. encourages teachers to make use of facilities and expertise in the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers;

3. sponsors regular community/school potlucks to celebrate the work of students and teachers and to promote on-going interaction and communication between teachers and parents;

4. attempts to articulate the cultural knowledge, values and beliefs that it wishes teachers to incorporate into the school curriculum;

5. establishes a program to insure the availability of Elders' expertise in all aspects of the educational program in the school.

F.

A culturally-supportive community contributes to all aspects of curriculum design and implementation in the local school.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. takes an active part in the development of the mission, goals and content of the local educational program;

2. promotes the active involvement of students with Elders in the documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge through a variety of print and multimedia formats;

3. facilitates teacher involvement in community activities and encourages the use of the local environment as a curricular resource;

4. promotes parental involvement in all aspects of their children's educational experience.

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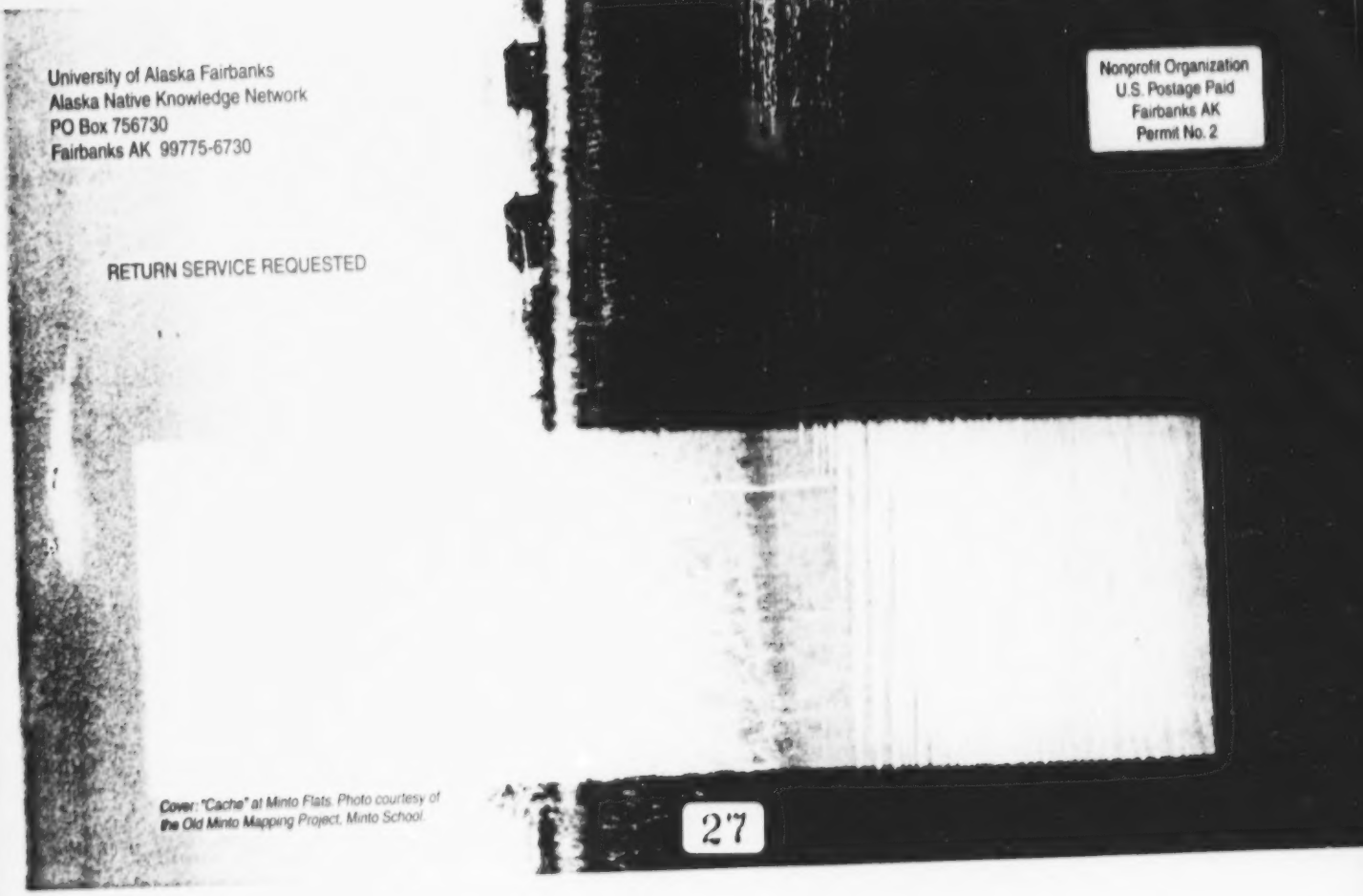

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